



# 1998-99 CATS ASSESSMENT

## Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

### Grade 10—Reading

#### Type of Passage: Literature

The **academic expectation** addressed by “Complaining” is

1.2 Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.

The **core content** assessed by this item includes

- Evaluate influence of characters, setting, point-of-view, plot, and structure within a passage.
- Analyze the effect of theme, conflict and resolution, symbolism, satire, ironies, analogies, and metaphors.

#### Complaining

Maya Angelou’s grandmother taught her several important lessons.

- Identify **two** lessons Maya Angelou’s grandmother taught her.
- Using information from the text, discuss **two** different ways the grandmother conveyed each lesson to Maya.



# SCORING GUIDE

## Grade 10 Reading

Score	Description
4	Response clearly identifies two lessons Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her and thoroughly discusses two ways each lesson was taught.
3	Response clearly identifies two lessons Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her but thoroughly discusses how only one of the two lessons was taught. <b>OR</b> Response clearly identifies two lessons Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her and adequately discusses two ways the lessons were taught. <b>OR</b> Response clearly identifies one lesson Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her and thoroughly discusses two ways the lesson was taught.
2	Response clearly identifies one lesson Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her and discusses one or two way(s) the lesson was taught. May lack some depth if two ways are discussed. <b>OR</b> Response identifies two lessons Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her and provides minimal discussion on how the lessons were taught. <b>OR</b> Response indicates how lessons were taught (e.g., she talked to her, told her not to whine) without identifying the lessons.
1	Response states lesson(s) learned.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

**Note:** The same ways may be used for the two lessons.

### Examples of lessons:

- Don't whine.
- Whining is graceless (social).
- Whining is dangerous (creates victims).
- Learn from the character flaws in others.
- Change your situation and/or change the way you think about your situation.

### Examples of ways lessons were taught:

- Rhetorical questioning
- Body language
- Example (individual cases)
- Being respectful of others
- Lecture/explanation
- Personal example (how grandmother lived her own life)



## READING PASSAGE

### Grade 10

*Much of what we believe, we have learned from our families. Read the passage written by Maya Angelou about the lesson she learned from her grandmother about complainers and complaining. Then answer the questions that follow.*

# COMPLAINING

Maya Angelou

## *from Wouldn't Take Nothing For My Journey Now*

When my grandmother was raising me in Stamps, Arkansas, she had a particular routine when people who were known to be whiners entered her store. Whenever she saw a known complainer coming, she would call me from whatever I was doing and say conspiratorially, "Sister, come inside. Come." Of course I would obey.

My grandmother would ask the customer, "How are you doing today, Brother Thomas?" And the person would reply, "Not so good." There would be a distinct whine in the voice. "Not so good today, Sister Henderson. You see, it's this summer. It's this summer heat. I just hate it. Oh, I hate it so much. It just frazzles me up and frazzles me down. I just hate the heat. It's almost killing me." Then my grandmother would stand stoically, her arms folded, and mumble, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." And she would cut her eyes at me to make certain that I had heard the lamentation.

At another time a whiner would mewl, "I hate plowing. That packed-down dirt ain't got no reasoning, and mules ain't got good sense.... Sure ain't. It's killing me. I can't ever seem to get done. My feet and my hands stay sore, and I get dirt in my eyes and up my nose. I just can't stand it." And my grandmother, again stoically with her arms folded, would say, "Uh-huh, uh-huh," and then look at me and nod.

As soon as the complainer was out of the store, my grandmother would call me to stand in front of her. And then she would say the same thing she had said at least a thousand times, it seemed to me. "Sister, did you hear what Brother So-and-So or Sister Much to Do complained about? You heard that?" And I would nod. Mamma would continue, "Sister, there are people who went to sleep all over the world last night, poor and rich and white and black, but they will never wake again. Sister, those who expected to rise did not, their beds became their cooling boards and their blankets became their winding sheets. And those dead folks would give anything, anything at all for just five minutes of this weather or ten minutes of that plowing that person was grumbling about. So you watch yourself about complaining, Sister. What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain."

It is said that persons have few teachable moments in their lives. Mamma seemed to have caught me at each one I had between the age of three and thirteen. Whining is not only graceless, but can be dangerous. It can alert a brute that a victim is in the neighborhood.

"Complaining" from *WOULDN'T TAKE NOTHING FOR MY JOURNEY NOW* by Maya Angelou. Copyright © 1993 by Maya Angelou. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 10 Reading

### Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

In the passage from Maya Angelou's "Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now," she speaks of a grandmother who taught her two very important lessons in different ways.

The first lesson she passes on to young Maya is that complaining won't get you anywhere in life. She told Maya that if you don't like a situation, change it. If there is nothing you can do about it, just accept it and go on with your life. Her grandmother had another way of teaching this stoic lesson. When she spotted a potential complainer entering the store she would proceed to ask the complainer how he or she was doing. Knowing how the person would respond, she'd pull Maya over with her, letting Maya hear the whining lament as it seemed to echo endlessly throughout her head. Hearing others complain made Maya realize just how annoying a whiner can be.

Her grandmother also taught her that not everything in life will work out perfectly. She let Maya know that no matter how bad a situation seems to be, there is always someone who would give their right arm to be in your shoes. To help illustrate her point, she would tell Maya that many people of all races, religions, and lifestyles die each day. Some people who expect to rise in the morning will not. The people that die would give just about anything for five minutes in the conditions that some people complain about. Maya now knows to be thankful for what she has and not to expect anything more.

The lessons Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her were so vivid that she is able to pass them to her readers today.

← Student identifies one lesson that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., complaining won't get you anywhere in life) and thoroughly discusses two ways that the lesson was taught (i.e., telling Maya that if she doesn't like a situation she should either change the situation or accept it and go on, and letting Maya listen to whiners).

← Student identifies a second lesson that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., not everything in life will work out perfectly) and thoroughly discusses two ways that the lesson was taught (i.e., letting Maya know that there are always others who would give their right arm to be in her shoes no matter how bad her situation, and telling Maya that there are people who die who would gladly accept the conditions of complainers if given the chance).

Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the text by clearly and thoroughly responding to the prompt.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 10 Reading

### Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her several important lessons. She taught that whining is graceless and dangerous. She also taught her that if you don't like something, change it, and if you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

One of the more important lessons taught to Maya by her grandmother was that whining is shameful and disgraceful. She conveyed this lesson to her by explaining that everything can't be changed. Such as the heat given off by the sun, or the rain pouring down, and you have to work with what you have. She also taught this lesson to her by calling her in and letting her listen to how ignorant a complainer sounded by calling her in when one was complaining.

A second lesson taught to Maya Angelou was that you can't change everything. She was conveyed this lesson also by letting her listen to a complainer that was complaining about something they couldn't change. She was also taught this lesson by being thoroughly told that if you don't like something you can't change then change your attitude.

This is how Maya Angelou was taught the very important lessons of living that everyone has to learn some time or another.

Student identifies two lessons that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., whining is graceless and dangerous, and if you don't like something change it or change the way you think about it).

Student thoroughly discusses two ways the first lesson was taught (i.e., explaining that not everything can be changed and letting Maya listen to complainers).

Student thoroughly discusses two ways the second lesson was taught (i.e., letting Maya listen to a person complaining about something they couldn't change and telling Maya that a person should change their attitude if they don't like something that can't be changed).

Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the text by clearly and thoroughly responding to the prompt.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 10 Reading

### Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Maya's grandmother taught her several important lessons in life. One is that when you don't like something, change it, don't complain, and the other is if you can't change what you don't like, change the way you think about it.

The grandmother taught each of the two lessons in an extremely smart fashion. One is that if she saw a whiner coming into the store she would call for Maya and she was to listen to them complain. The other is that after the complainer left the store she (the grandmother) gave a lecture that Maya said she had given a thousand times before.

I don't believe that Maya will grow up to be a complainer because her grandmother showed her how distasteful it can be. Grandmothers are great to have.

← Student identifies two lessons that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., when you don't like something change it, and if you can't change what you don't like, change the way you think about it).

← Student discusses one way the lessons were taught (i.e., having Maya listen to complainers).

← Student discusses a second way the lessons were taught (i.e., giving a lecture after a person complained).

Overall, the student demonstrates understanding of the text by adequately responding to the prompt.



# ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

## Grade 10 Reading

### Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Her grandmother taught her not to complain and to listen to how people sound when they complain. She talked about how you don't know what you've got until it's gone. She told Maya to listen to the people who she knew were complainers.

← Student identifies one lesson that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., not to complain).

← Student discusses two ways the lesson was taught (i.e., explaining that people don't know what they have until it's gone and having Maya listen to complainers).

Overall, student demonstrates some understanding of the text by partially responding to the prompt.

### Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

#### Student Response

Her grandmother taught her not to complain because there is somebody else out there who has less. You should never complain because it is going to get you nowhere in life fast except for making you sit at home.

← Student identifies one lesson that Maya Angelou's grandmother taught her (i.e., not to complain) and makes a statement about the importance of the lesson rather than discussing how it was taught.

Overall, the student demonstrates minimal understanding of the text.



# INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

## Grade 10 Reading

The open-response item “**Complaining**” assesses students’ skills in reading and understanding a literary text. By successfully responding to this item, students demonstrate their ability to understand an author’s use of character to present theme. The instructional strategies below present ideas for helping students explore and master these skills.

- A. List parallel passages from pieces of literature, other than “Complaining,” in which one character teaches a lesson to another character. (Consider, for example, one of the lessons Atticus teaches his children in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.) Then have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete any or all of the following activities:
  1. List two lessons that were taught/learned in each of the passages and list the ways in which the lessons were taught/learned.
  2. Discuss the variety of ways in which a lesson can be taught and learned (e.g., by action, by words, by observation, by force). Consider the choice that would be appropriate for different purposes, different ages, and/or different situations.
  3. Discuss the ways that they have been taught lessons, both in and out of school, and consider the ways they think they learn best. In writing, students could name two lessons they have learned and two ways these lessons were taught.
  4. Write their own memoir that includes an anecdote in which a lesson is taught and/or learned.
  5. Write a character sketch of an older person who has had some influence on them (e.g., a neighbor, grandparent, family friend, teacher).
- B. Use excerpts from a variety of drama and fiction that demonstrate the relationship of character and theme as it relates to this prompt. (For example Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, Gibson’s *The Miracle Worker*, Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Faulkner’s *The Bear*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and Cather’s *My Antonia* each contain passages in which a character learns or is taught a lesson.) Then have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete any or all of the following activities:
  1. Find lessons in these excerpts and discuss the ways in which the lessons are taught or learned.
  2. Share related examples from their own reading.